

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Department of Labor and Industry

Program Plan for Reemployment Services Allotment PY 2004

In response to Training and Guidance Letter No. 5-04, the Pennsylvania Employment Security Agency (Department of Labor and Industry, Bureau of Workforce Development Partnership) is providing the following Program Plan. According to the federal administrative formula based on Unemployment Compensation (UC) first payments, Pennsylvania's Reemployment Services Allotment for PY 2004 is \$1,526,880. Approximately \$1,176,597.87 is available for carry over from PY 2003. This plan describes how these funds will be used. Pennsylvania's Reemployment Services funds are utilized as staff time charges. Retroactive fund reimbursement is not easily accomplished with Pennsylvania's new SAP accounting system. Consequently, the substantial amount of Reemployment Service funds carried over for expenditure in PY 2004 is due to the late release of PY 2003 funds in April 2004, leaving only three months of program operation charged during PY 2003.

Background. In the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, reemployment services were more broadly defined and integrated into the new One-Stop Center concept. In addition, the Workforce Investment Act transformed the public labor exchange from a nationwide system of separate local employment offices into the foundation of the nation's One-Stop Centers, thereby creating a new environment for reemployment services. In Pennsylvania, the One-Stop Centers are called CareerLinks, and the automated One-Stop system is referred to as the CareerLink system. As one of the major investor-partners in the Pennsylvania CareerLink System, the Bureau of Workforce Development Partnership (BWDP) administers Wagner-Peyser services and related programs. For nearly 70 years, Wagner-Peyser funded services have been one of the primary tools for helping UC claimants return to work. Through the One-Stops, service to UC claimants increases with access to the Wagner-Peyser Act services and the broad range of other employment and training services provided by partners.

Pennsylvania's strategy over the years for improving the quality and quantity of reemployment services for UC claimants has been built on best practices, and targets the enhancement of direct service delivery to all UC claimants. Research has shown that a combination of early intervention, intensive work search, and staff-assisted job search assistance speeds the transition of workers into new jobs. Therefore, Pennsylvania looks at the entire continuum of services for UC claimants, from their first awareness of an impending layoff, through their initial UC claim, reemployment services and eventual return to work. The result is that more claimants are served and more claimants get jobs sooner. Additionally, the program is used to strengthen the linkages between the UC Service Centers and Rapid Response (RR) activities for dislocated workers provided through Title 1

WIA, Employment Service, and other CareerLink partners. Regional Workforce Development Seminars are held quarterly to resolve issues and share updated information among the CareerLinks, UC Service Centers, and other partner agencies.

UC Reemployment Allotment PY 2003 Activities

During PY 2001, there were eight Rapid Reemployment Program (RRP) pilot projects, encompassing 19 CareerLinks, selected through a request for proposal. Each pilot office was selected to provide enhanced reemployment services to UC claimants. As of July 1, 2002, the RRP program expanded to all of the CareerLink sites statewide so that reemployment services are being provided in CareerLink offices across the state rather than in selected pilot sites. In PY 2003, Rapid Reemployment Program services were again provided statewide.

Pennsylvania Act 156 of 2002 became effective in December 2002. It requires that all claimants eligible for UC be referred to employment offices (CareerLinks) for reemployment services. All claimants that file an initial claim for benefits receive a UC Claim Confirmation Letter. The letter includes an invitation for claimants to contact the nearest CareerLink site for reemployment services. In addition, the Department of Labor and Industry developed an automated interface (UC Module) between UC Service Centers and the CareerLink computer systems that provides a weekly list of claimants who file an initial claim for UC. This supports UC Reemployment Programs with claimant lists, automated notification letters, and service rosters. An RRP Call-In Letter list is prepared weekly, and includes all claimants that filed an initial claim the week immediately following the file date. This enables staff to contact claimants prior to the receipt of their first UC check to assist in their job search efforts. The Profiling ReEmployment Program (PREP), Pennsylvania's version of the Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services (WRPS), Call-In Letter list displays claimants the week after they receive their first payment, ranking those most likely to exhaust their UC benefits before returning to work at the top of the list.

PY 2003 Performance Goals

To increase savings to the UC Fund by reducing UC benefit charges, Pennsylvania's PY 2003 plan established the following goals for the RRP:

1. Of the UC claimants who are registered, at least 90% will be provided value-added services.
2. Of the UC claimants who received a service, at least 55% will have entered employment.

UC Reemployment Services Allotment PY 2003 Results

For PY 2003, a total of 76,266 UC claimants were served among the CareerLink offices in Pennsylvania according to the ETA-9002 report. The total number of UC claimants served increased by 23% in PY 2003 from PY 2002.

Of the total number of claimants served:

- 96% received some type of value-added service
- 67% participated in job search activities
- 58% entered employment

Best Practices

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry developed an Intranet website Homepage with shared folders for BWDP staff to reference during Program Year 2003. The shared folders are used for posting PREP and RRP policies and procedures, PREP and RRP lists by CareerLink site, PREP and RRP Local Service Activity Reports, monitoring reports, and Best Practices. By using the shared folders as the established communication network with CareerLinks, information is timely and available to all staff. During PY 2004, the shared folders reports have been incorporated into a Crystal Enterprise project known as the Workforce Development Reports Management System (WDRMS). Through the WDRMS, these reports are now available to all CareerLink partners, and future enhancements are planned to allow for customized reports.

Best Practices are shared with CareerLink staff during program training sessions and monitoring reviews for continued improvement of reemployment services to UC claimants as well as to meet and exceed statewide goals.

UC Reemployment Allotment PY 2004

Goal For Use of PY 2004 Funds. For PY 2004, plans are to combine the PREP and RRP programs utilizing the most effective procedures of each program and building on best practices already established. The statewide goal for continued use of the Reemployment Allotment is to insure that all permanently separated UC claimants are enrolled and registered for employment services in the CareerLink operating system, and to increase the number of UC claimants that enter employment. Extensive research has shown that integrated UC and One-Stop services, more intensive work search, staff-assisted job search assistance, services that are integrated with remote initial claim filing, early identification of UC claimants who are likely to face lengthy spells of unemployment, and early

intervention with job search and similar services are effective approaches to providing reemployment services resulting in positive outcomes.

The investment of money, staff, and other resources to expedite the reemployment of UC claimants has greatly benefited individual UC claimants by helping them rejoin the workforce, has aided the economic stability in communities across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by lessening the impact of unemployment, and has resulted in a very positive cost-benefit ratio in the cost of services compared to the savings in UC benefit charges.

Reemployment Services. Based on the level of service needed, CareerLink offices have tailored staff-assisted services to meet the specific needs of each UC claimant participating in UC reemployment programs. This practice has met with overwhelming success and customer satisfaction and will continue in PY 2004. "Best Practices" will be shared for continued improvement of reemployment services to UC claimants as well as to meet and exceed statewide goals. Plans are to increase the number of claimants called in for the UC Reemployment Programs; and to supplement those programs with a more aggressive service structure, including workshops, job finding clubs, follow-up, and customer satisfaction feedback. The Rapid Reemployment eligibility lists will be utilized to target special groups, such as Veterans, occupational groups, specific employers and unemployed workers from in-demand business and industry clusters.

The following are services that are being provided by CareerLinks statewide to expedite reemployment for UC claimants.

1. Eligibility, Orientation and Enrollment Services:
 - Orientation to CareerLink reemployment services
 - Intake and innovative approaches for outreach services to enroll claimants in the CareerLink web-based system and to register claimants for reemployment services
 - Initial assessment of service needs
 - General labor market information and demand listing employment statistics
 - Performance information on training programs and providers
 - Performance information on the one-stop delivery system
 - Information on supportive services
 - Orientation to Career Resource Area usage
 - Information on Internet job listings, including USDOL and other web sites
 - Software and assistance for resume' preparation and career exploration
2. Job Search Services Specifically Designed for UC Claimants:
 - Initial development of employment plan

- Labor market information related to claimants
- Comprehensive assessment of claimant service needs, and inventory of claimant interests
- Talent/resume referrals
- Job opening information
- Job search and placement assistance, including automated job match
- Job referrals
- Job development including working with employers on behalf of claimants
- Pre-screening for specific employers and business and industry clusters
- Job Search Workshops
- Job Finding Clubs

3. Intensive Services for UC Claimants:

- Comprehensive and specialized claimant needs assessment
- Full development of individual employment plan, including individual career and recruitment planning
- Job profiling, customized screening and recruitment for employers
- Case management or customer tracking
- Short-term pre-vocational services
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for training and education programs
- Follow-up services
- Group activities with other similar customers
- Seminars and informational workshops

Early Intervention Services. Pennsylvania's UC Reemployment Programs were designed to allow maximum flexibility at the local level in designing programs that would integrate with and complement other workforce development activities within the Local Workforce Investment Area. CareerLinks were given a set of core services that were to be provided or available at the site with flexibility in the delivery of the services, and additional intensive services that are provided accordingly based on office capacity and staff availability.

Core Services. The core services that are available in all sites across the state are: reemployment program orientation, Career Resource Area orientation, enrollment into the CareerLink system, job search assistance, job finding clubs, referral services, labor market information, job development, and resume preparation.

BWDP staff and other Pennsylvania CareerLink partners negotiate mutually convenient dates, times, the number of orientation sessions necessary to accommodate claimants, and the number of claimants per session based on the capacity of each site. The reemployment program orientation includes, at a minimum, program information, orientation to the Career Resource Area, introduction of site partners and services available, assistance with enrollment into the CareerLink system, and registration for employment services.

More Intensive or Staff-Assisted Services. An assessment of employment needs is completed for each claimant to develop an employment plan identifying available services/activities the claimant needs. A thorough review of each claimant's work history, education, and skills by CareerLink staff with the claimant is necessary to determine the level of service required. Referrals are made to supportive services in order to reduce barriers to employment. Assessment forms have been developed in both English and Spanish.

The more intensive reemployment services that are available across the state are: reemployment program assessment, job search workshops, job search planning, career guidance services, counseling, testing, interview skill training, and vocational guidance.

Services to Claimants in Targeted Occupations or Industries. Veterans Representatives can search specifically for veterans on the RRP Call-In Letter list or PREP Call-In Letter list and schedule those veterans for an orientation and/or assessment session. CareerLink staff can also search for claimants based on any or all of the following categories, i.e. Occupation, Employer, Disability, and Separation Status to send notification of programs, job fairs, recruitments, or special events.

Improved Services to Profiled Claimants. Each claimant provided reemployment services is contacted at regular intervals to establish if additional services are required, check for positive outcomes, and review customer satisfaction of the programs and services. UC claimants' participation in reemployment services is tracked until they either exhaust their UC benefits or until they complete and/or terminate their reemployment services.

Customer Satisfaction Feedback. Pennsylvania CareerLinks will collect and maintain Customer Satisfaction Surveys in order to evaluate the customers' perceptions of services that have been provided and to strive for continuous program improvement. CareerLink offices have been authorized to use the Customer Satisfaction Survey developed by BWDP or to develop their own format. Customer Satisfaction Surveys may be distributed after the completion of the orientation session, assessment interview, job search workshop, etc., or may be sent to the participants at a later date. The survey format and time frame are at the discretion of each CareerLink office.

Enhancements to Pennsylvania's UC Reemployment Program

Further enhancements to the UC Module were implemented in July 2003 to expedite the delivery of reemployment services for all claimants throughout Pennsylvania.

On September 16, 2003, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Employment & Training Administration provided general guidance on implementing the veterans' priority provisions of the "Jobs For Veterans Act." Pennsylvania added enhancements to the current automated interface (UC Module) to comply with

the veteran priority of service requirements for reemployment programs. The RRP Call-In Letter list displays claimants in the following order: (1) Special Disabled Veterans (30% or more disability), (2) Disabled Veterans (0-29% disability), (3) Veterans, and (4) All remaining claimants. CareerLink staff selects and schedules claimants for orientation working from the top of the list down based on staff availability and office capacity.

Plans are to further enhance the CareerLink operating system in Pennsylvania by adding the following:

- More immediate updates of data from UC to the CareerLink files (i.e. name, address, phone number, e-mail, office claim transfers, and profiling data items, etc.)
- Type of separation from employment
- Effective date of UC claim
- Type of work the claimant is seeking
- Last employer (name, phone number, and e-mail)
- Claim balances (4, 8, 12 weeks filed indicators and balances; plus 13 and 2 weeks prior to maximum benefit exhaustion (MBE date))

Additional search functions will be implemented to extend this data beyond the county limit. CareerLink facilities may individually identify customer target groups, such as claimants separated from specific employers. This feature will help to serve dislocated workers and Trade-impacted claimants to enhance linkages between the Trade, Rapid Response, and Self-Employment Assistance Modules.

Claimants are invited to participate in a wide variety of CareerLink services through both "Job Match" and general "Call-In" letters, which will expand to include other program and service notifications. Upon completion of the Unemployment Compensation Modernization Project, positive and failed action information will be provided electronically to UC.

Updating Profiling Model. Plans are to update and enhance the profiling model to better determine the individuals on the profiling list who are most likely to exhaust benefits before returning to work. Dialogue is continuing between CareerLink and UC Service Center staff to ensure that the UC script used by UC Initial Claims Interviewers solicits the best possible information to assist in the reemployment process. Changes to the script questions have been ongoing.

Development of Tools for Self-Service. The electronic version of the O*Net Assessment Tools is available on each computer in the Career Resource Areas of all CareerLink offices. The Work Importance Profiler and the Interest Profiler can help identify related occupations that can be used to guide claimants in their job search activities.

Reporting

To evaluate the success of the reemployment programs, Pennsylvania uses the Labor Exchange Performance Measures for eligible claimant statistics contained in the ETA-9002 report to determine the number of claimants who received staff-assisted services, participated in job search activities, and entered employment. The PREP Local Service Activity Report and the RRP Local Service Activity Report are compiled statistics reported in the CareerLink operating system. Accurate and timely entry of all services rendered by BWDP and other service providers into the CareerLink operating system is the basis for PREP and RRP tracking. An individual CareerLink office and a composite State Report are prepared monthly, quarterly, and annually for distribution to state and local management.

For PY 2004, the reporting process will be streamlined with the merger of Pennsylvania's PREP and RRP programs. The individual PREP Local Service Activity Reports will continue to be prepared monthly, quarterly, and annually. Beginning with PY 2004, the reports have been incorporated into the WDRMS and are available to all CareerLink partners. Future enhancements are planned to allow for customized reports. In addition, the ETA-9048 and ETA-9049 report employment service activity for the Profiling ReEmployment Program.

Pennsylvania's Unemployment Compensation Modernization Project has not been completed to date, so direct feeds between the UC reporting system and the CareerLink employment service reports to provide the necessary statistical information to measure the program outcomes is not yet available. The Labor & Industry Center for Workforce Information and Analysis is developing a new method of calculating savings as a result of reemployment program participation; however, the new method of cost savings will not be available for some time.

Summary

Pennsylvania's strategy for improving the quality and quantity of reemployment services for UC claimants is to build on existing best practices, continue to develop and share new best practices, and target the reemployment allotment funds where they will have the most positive outcome.

Plans are to increase the number of claimants called in for PREP, and to supplement PREP with a more aggressive service structure, including

workshops, job finding clubs, follow-up, and customer satisfaction feedback. The RRP Call-In Letter list will be utilized to target special groups, such as Veterans, occupational groups, specific employers and unemployed workers from in-demand business and industry clusters.